

THE QUIVER

Saturday, February 15, 1868.



(Drawn by J. D. WATSON.)

"The sound of the fall brought out John Brett and his wife."—p. 339.

SOWING IN TEARS.

CHAPTER II.

A FEW days more, and Lois was finally settled in the squalid home, where she found her father languishing almost in a state

of starvation. It consisted of two rooms at the top of a crowded lodging-house, and no words can describe the contrast to the luxurious abode she had left.

At first her father's delight at having her with him, and the blessings he showered on her head for having come to rescue him from want and suffering, seemed almost to compensate for the unspeakable sacrifice she had made for him; but soon the dreadful realities of her position forced themselves upon her, and she entered on a dark period of trial and misery, the details of which may be summed up in a few words, though it seemed to her like a century of anguish. Not only had she to endure the loss of all that made life dear, but the father for whom she had renounced her happiness, was himself a source of grief and terror to her. His habits of intemperance had greatly increased in his solitude, and when he gave way to them he would fall into paroxysms of rage, in which he would vent on Lois all his anger and bitterness at his wife's desertion; and often she trembled, not without reason, before his ungovernable violence.

But her worst trial was the fear that the one hope of leading his soul to God, which had prompted her to her noble sacrifice, would never be fulfilled. His wife's conduct, in the face of her pretensions to great piety, had confirmed him in the belief, which suited well with his own want of principle, that religion was mere hypocrisy on the part of most persons, and a vain dream in the case of others. And often Lois' heart would sink, and she would wonder if, indeed, her great effort for his salvation was to be unavailing, and her whole life sacrificed in vain; but she would check herself with the remembrance that God would accept her offering, even if he did not permit her to see the results she hoped in this world, and that beyond the grave, if not here, those who had sown in tears would surely reap in joy.

After a time, cares of a kind she had never before experienced began to press upon Lois. Dormer's habits of extravagance had returned upon him in full force when he found himself with money in his possession, and he had exhausted all Lois' available resources long before the time when her little income would again become due. It was with utter dismay that Lois had found herself unable to prevent his squandering in a few months their sole means of support for a year; and at last her worst fears were realised, and want stared them in the face.

When she was obliged to own to her father that their last shilling was gone, he told her, somewhat roughly, that she must at once write to her uncle to ask him to send her a hundred pounds.

"It will be nothing to him, with his thousands," he said, bitterly; "and I suppose he would not like his niece to starve, though she is my daughter."

Lois clasped her hands together in bitter pain.

"My dear father," she said, "it is impossible—

my uncle is the last person from whom I could ask money. He has forbidden me to hold any communication with him, and I do not believe he would grant my request—certainly, I have no right to make it."

Dormer was half intoxicated at the time, and his sole answer was to order her with such cruel threats to do as he desired, that she could only obey in trembling, though it was very galling to her to be obliged to plead for help of this nature from the uncle who had formally denounced her, and cast her off.

Two days later an answer arrived. Dormer had been drinking just enough to rouse all the evil of his nature without stupefying him. He snatched the letter out of Lois' hand before she had time to look at it, and tore it open. The envelope contained only a cheque for five pounds, with a single line from Sir Edward, to say that he sent her this for her mother's sake, but it was the last penny she should ever receive from him, and that any future letter from her would be returned unopened. At the sight of this insult, as Dormer termed it, his excitement and fury rose to a height beyond anything Lois had ever witnessed. With an oath he swore that Sir Edward Granville should give them the money they required, in spite of himself, and, taking the cheque from Lois' hand, he altered the figure to a hundred and five; then, opening the door, he pointed to the stair, and ordered Lois to take it at once to the bank.

"Your uncle will not prosecute you, even when he discovers the fraud," he said; "therefore you shall take it instead of me, for he would be glad enough to see me rot in a gaol."

Lois looked at him for a moment in utter amazement, and then, with an indignation she could not repress, she asked him if he were mad to propose to her to commit so great a crime.

"How dare you answer me in that manner?" he exclaimed: "you will do as I tell you, without another word, or I'll find a way to make you."

He dragged her towards the open door; but she resisted, and, drawing herself out of his grasp, said, "No, father, you shall not force me to do wrong. I cannot—I will not."

"Do you mean to say that you will not do as I order you?" said Dormer, coming towards her in a threatening manner.

"I cannot commit a sin," she said, trembling in every limb, as she saw that he was working himself up to one of the paroxysms of rage which sometimes possessed him when he was intoxicated.

"Ah! you set yourself up to be better than your father," he said. "Now, look here," he continued, with a concentrated fury which made her heart die with terror, "if you don't go and do as I tell you this instant, I'll give you such a

lesson as you won't forget in a hurry. You shan't disobey your father for nothing, I can tell you. Will you go?" and he came closer to her as he spoke.

It was very dreadful—the cruel, threatening face of the infuriated man—the conviction that he was very likely to kill her in his unreasoning, ungovernable rage. He repeated his question in a yet fiercer tone. Her knees shook; her voice almost failed her; but the true, brave heart was firm.

"I cannot sin against God," she said.

"You defy me, then!" he exclaimed.

"It is better to die than to sin," she articulated, faintly; and instantly, with an oath, he struck her a dreadful blow, which sent her reeling towards the stair, and before she could recover her balance she had fallen down a flight of six or seven steps, and lay a motionless heap on the landing-place below.

The sound of the fall brought out John Brett and his wife, the tenants of the next room, and they lifted up the poor girl with many expressions of regret and dismay as they saw that she was quite unconscious. Her head fell back, and her sweet face seemed so deathlike, that they both feared the worst had befallen her. They carried her up-stairs and placed her on her bed, and Brett then called out to Dormer to go for a doctor as quickly as he could, though he doubted if a regiment of doctors could save the poor child's life.

The wretched father had been thoroughly sobered by the shock, and, overcome with horror at the thought that he had perhaps killed his gentle, loving child, he flew rather than ran for the parish doctor, with whom he soon returned. He could not face the sight of his victim, however, and he remained outside till the medical man reappeared. The doctor at once told Dormer that he could do nothing; the girl had received fatal internal injuries, and was even then dying. She might linger a few hours, but not more; and having delivered his verdict, he hastened away.

Stupefied with anguish, the unhappy father stood motionless, till Brett and his wife came out and said that Lois wished to see him. Then with shaking knees he slowly went up-stairs, dreading unspeakably the sight of his dying child. Yet when he entered the room, even his agony of grief and remorse was stilled, at the aspect of ineffable peace which brightened as with a radiance from heaven itself the sweet pale face of the dying girl. They had propped her up on pillows, and her soft brown hair streamed over them, bringing out into strong relief the tranquil countenance, more lovely in the pallor of death than even in her fairest days. Her large eyes had acquired that unnatural brilliancy which is so often seen in the last hours

of life, and they were turned towards the open window with a look as if she were listening to sounds unheard by others. Her delicate hands were folded on her breast in an attitude of calm submission, and a faint smile touched her white lips as with a gleam of sunshine.

She turned a bright look on her father as he entered, and feebly held out her hand to him. He came and flung himself on his knees beside her.

"Oh, Lois—oh, my darling! can you forgive me? I was mad! I never meant to hurt you. Forgive me—oh, forgive!"

"Dearest father," she said, in her faint, sweet voice, "so far as I am concerned, I do indeed forgive; the accident would not have killed me, had not God willed to take me home. And I am thankful to go—thankful that the struggle of life is over—the struggle with sin and with temptation. Oh! it will be such a blessed change!" and she lifted her bright face almost with a look of rapture to the fair blue sky, which she could see through the open window.

Dormer looked at her in amazement; even his bitter remorse was for the moment forgotten in his astonishment, and involuntarily he exclaimed, "But, Lois, do you not grieve to die so young?"

"Oh, no," she answered, "I am very glad; this life is but the preparation for the real, the true life, and they are happiest who are soonest ready. Think—think what it will be to meet the blessed Saviour face to face! to be with him for ever!" She remained silent with a look of adoring love in her eyes, while her lips moved as if she were speaking softly to one unseen.

A sensation of awe passed over Dormer; instinctively he exclaimed, "There must be truth in this religion!" and then, not daring to disturb her, he continued to kneel by her side, till gradually the white lids fell over the clear, beautiful eyes, and she sank into a gentle sleep.

Some hours passed, during which Mrs. Brett came several times to look at her with ever-increasing anxiety, for the good woman was a tolerably experienced nurse, and she had sufficient knowledge to detect that the pulse was growing feebler, and the snow-white face more cold and death-like; yet they dared not interrupt that calm repose, the reflection, as it were, of the deeper rest to which she was hastening. Late at night, the old clergyman came, having travelled with all speed to London, on receipt of a telegraphic message, which Brett had sent him by Lois' desire. Dormer went to speak to him in the other room, leaving Mrs. Brett to watch over Lois. Without attempting to excuse himself in any way, he told the whole truth to the clergyman, seeming to find a relief in pouring out to this compassionate hearer some of the depths of the remorse that was consuming him.

"Oh, sir!" he exclaimed at last, "do you think the world contains a more miserable wretch than I am? I have killed the only being I loved—yes! and the only one who ever truly loved me. Lois left her uncle's luxurious home to come and share my poverty and degradation, and now, because she would not do what seemed an awful crime to her religious faith, I have killed her! Sir, I have often said that religion was all hypocrisy; I cannot say so now."

"No," said the clergyman, with a grave sternness, "nor would you have ever said so—in the case of your martyred child, at least—had you known the extent of the sacrifice she made to her religious convictions, when she left her uncle's house for yours. Do you know that she yielded up for ever, that which was dearer to her than all the wealth or luxury the world could give?"

"No—what?" exclaimed Dormer in a shaking voice.

"Nothing less than her whole hope of happiness on earth. She loved Phillip Hervey, her uncle's heir, with all the love of her pure, true heart; and he loved her far better than the titled lady he has married now. Lois would have been his wife, the pleasant house which was her home so long would ultimately have been her own; but the voice of Him who pleased not himself called her to follow Him on the rough road of self-sacrifice, and she left all that was precious to her in this life, to bring a blessing on your godless home."

"And I killed her!" said Dormer, groaning, as he covered his face with his hands; "I requited her with blows—with death!"

"Dormer," said the clergyman, laying his hand on his bowed head, "you have dared to scoff at the Christian religion, to doubt its truth and the sincerity of those professing it; can you any longer disbelieve the Divine power of that faith, which could nerve a young girl to empty her life of all its joy, and accept disgrace and suffering for His sake, who bade her seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, before all earthly good?"

"No, I cannot—indeed, I cannot. Oh, that I had such a hope beyond the grave as she has!"

"To lead you to such a hope was the one longing of your daughter's heart," said the clergyman; "and she will consider her life cheaply given if it brings your soul to God."

At that moment Mrs. Brett entered hastily to say that Lois was awake. "And, oh, sir! I fear she is going; she is so awfully changed."

Dormer started up and hastened to his daughter's room, followed by the clergyman. She was indeed changed! the shadows of death had gathered over the lovely face, childlike in its innocence and candour, and the sobbing breath came faint and hurried over the lips, quivering as it seemed with some last irrepressible emotion. The

bright, beautiful eyes wandered restlessly from side to side, and the cold, white hands clutched at the bedclothes with a spasmodic movement.

"Father, father! I want my father!" she gasped, with an eagerness which it was painful to witness.

Dormer advanced and bent over her. "I am here, my child—my darling!"

She put her hands round his head and forced him to meet her earnest gaze. "Father," she said, "I have already almost passed from earth; I can see the lights gleaming on the eternal shore. All things divine and human are made clear to me in this supreme moment, as they could not be to one still belonging to this world, and I tell you the Christian faith is true, even as God is true, and I tell you there is nothing that avails to any mortal man, but to secure the everlasting hope it offers. Father, I cannot die and leave you to destruction; let me win, in this last hour, that for which I have prayed and striven through so many weary months. I cannot go into the heavenly, sinless land, to meet the smile of Christ, and leave you here to perish in godless darkness. Tell me that you will go to Him who loved you to the death, and loves you still, to fling yourself upon his pity—to ask from him the repentance, the faith, the hope he never denies to those who seek them; tell me that you will follow him in life, and he in death will guide you to the peaceful mansions of his Father's house; tell me that you will be his, as I am his, and I shall be blest beyond all words, and ever through eternity will I thank God who brought me back to you, that he might crown me in the hour of death with the precious gift of your redemption."

"I do, my child," cried Dormer, with tears raining from his eyes; "I do believe in the Saviour, whose grace has made you what you are. If his infinite love can look with pity even on such a rebel as I have been, I will seek no other joy in life but to sit at his feet and learn of him how to adore his wonderful goodness throughout the endless ages; and if my sins seem too great for his mercy, Lois, I yet will pass my days in penitence and prayer, and leave my poor soul in his mighty hands."

"Do you remember what he said?" asked Lois, her face lighting up with unearthly radiance—"None shall ever pluck them out of my hands." He will not cast you out, dear father. Now, God be thanked for ever, for his wondrous love, for the sweetness of this death is more than all the sweetness I ever found in life."

As she spoke she fell back gently on her pillows, but an answering smile brightened her face as the old clergyman bending over her said, softly, "Dear child, your sacrifice has been accepted; your light affliction, which was but for a moment, will be lost in the weight of eternal glory, which

will surround your father and yourself in the realms of light—you have sown indeed in tears, but you will reap in joy."

As he spoke, her eyes opened once more, clear, bright, and joyous, gazing intently upwards; then slowly they closed. A few moments she lay, her breathing growing fainter and fainter, till it seemed like the sigh of one far off, and then while

the clergyman said the last prayers in a low, calm voice, the pure and gentle spirit floated out into the unseen, and the price of her self-sacrifice was sealed, as her father sank upon his knees and poured forth his first repentant, heartfelt prayer to the Divine Redeemer, in whose blissful presence his child was even then reposing.

REMINISCENCES OF WELLINGTON, WITH ANECDOTES OF HIS STAFF.

BY LORD WILLIAM LENNOX.



NECDOTES of Wellington are "plentiful as blackberries;" and books have been written to record his "sayings and doings," many of which will remind the reader of a reply made to a compiler by a celebrated critic: "Your book, sir, contains much that is new, and much that is true; but that which is new is not true, and that which is true is not new." Let the following be taken as specimens:—

"Of the duke's perfect coolness on the most trying occasions," writes Mr. Rogers, "Colonel Gurwood gave this instance: He was once in great danger of being drowned at sea. It was bed-time, when the captain of the vessel came to him and said, 'It will soon be all over with us.' 'Very well,' answered the duke, 'then I shall not take off my boots.'"

Collected as Wellington was in danger, he was never guilty of so irreverent a remark at such an awful moment. Another instance will suffice: "A lady of rank once asked the duke whether it was true that he had been surprised at Waterloo by Napoleon. 'I never was surprised until now,' was his characteristic reply." Now these are very amusing stories, but they lack one great feature—truth; indeed, many of the anecdotes told of Wellington have been gleaned from jest books, and call to remembrance the epigram:—

"There are jokes in your volume which, looking it o'er,
It struck me I've met a good many before:
Joe Miller, for instance.' 'Well, well,' muttered Pat,
'I suppose you don't think them the worse, sir, for that.'"

In what I have undertaken I am anxious, as much as possible, to avoid egotism, for it is of my former chief, upon whose personal staff I served three years, that I am here to speak, and not of myself; but having been immediately connected with many of the incidents I have to relate, it is impossible entirely to avoid the offensive pronoun I. In my introduction to the great duke will be seen the truth of the old saying, that important events spring from trifling causes. Newton's discovery of the principle of gravitation was brought about by the fall of an apple; the origin of gun-

powder is attributed to the accidental friction of a piece of charcoal upon which salt had been dropped; and steam, which has aptly been termed water in an extraordinary state of perspiration, owes its discovery to the over-boiling of a tea-kettle; and for the honour that was conferred upon me by Wellington, I am indebted to a feat of agility, a mere pantomimic trick.

It was during the Christmas holidays, some fifty-five years ago, when my father was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, that I first saw Sir Arthur Wellesley, at that time Irish Secretary. A brother of mine and a few young Westminster School friends were anxious to display our histrionic powers, and we prevailed upon my parents to allow us to get up an amateur performance in a large room at the Castle, admirably suited for the purpose. Our ambition was to shine in tragedy, so we selected Rowe's somewhat lachrymose "Jane Shore," and a comic performance to follow. One morning, Wellesley entered the room, during a rehearsal, while I, as *Lord Hastings*, was ranting away, pleading the cause of "Shore's unhappy wife." He remained a few minutes—a very few minutes, and as he was about to leave, he remarked to my mother, "I fear that the laughter of the audience will be so excited by the tragedy, that they won't have a smile left for the farce." This remark, though not very flattering, produced its proper effect, and we compromised the affair by announcing scenes from the "Lady of the Lake."

All went off well during the rehearsals, when, unfortunately, a day or two before the performance was to take place our nimble harlequin sprained his ankle. To act a comic piece without the spangled hero, would be like performing "Hamlet" without the Prince of Denmark, and to find one at so short a notice was next to impossible. An Irish youth—"a regular broth of a boy," as he was called at college—volunteered to take the part, "barring the leaps," and we gladly accepted his services. Losing no time in ordering a spangled suit, and having my motley garb made so loose that I could easily put it on and off, I

soon drilled the volunteer into the work required of him, which was to throw himself into graceful attitudes, and belabour me with his wand, while I was employed in stealing sausages, pilfering legs of mutton, and knocking every one down that came in my way, according to the approved plan of Christmas entertainments. The eventful night arrived. I pass over the scenes from Sir Walter Scott, in which, I am bound to say, we were far from perfect in the words. Indeed, Sheridan's remark was painfully applicable to us, for that celebrated author and dramatist, being asked which actor he liked best at an amateur performance, replied, "The prompter, for I saw less and heard more of him than any one else."

The entertainment went off well until towards the end, when an untoward event occurred. The feat of the evening was a leap through a huge painted transparent clock, through which I was to take the double leap. When the scene came on, I, in my motley garb, took the leap. Then succeeded sundry attempts of the others to follow, which went on until I had changed my dress and reappeared. In the meantime, the clock had ascended, and when I took the leap the applause was immense. No one was more vociferous than Sir Arthur Wellesley, who, from his earliest years, was a supporter of athletic games. "Bravo, bravo!" he exclaimed, "I never saw a higher leap." Elated with success, I was again dressing myself when the event occurred to which I have alluded.

Our temporary scene-shifter, in removing the clock, did not give me sufficient time; and when he drew it off, a scene presented itself that baffles description. In one corner sat the volunteer, enjoying that schoolboy's treat, a glass of wine and some cake; while I, in the other, half in one dress and half in another, my attendant assisting me in the transformation, was indulging in the less aristocratic luxury of a pint of Dublin porter out of the pewter pot. Some of the audience fancied it was a real scene; but the quick eye of Wellesley at once discovered the device, and loudly applauded it.

"Clown and harlequin in one," he said, in his usual quick manner. "Capital!"

During supper I was taken up to Sir Arthur, who complimented me warmly; then, turning to my mother, said—

"Duchess, you ought to send William to Astley's."

"I hope better things for him," she replied. "He looks forward to getting a commission in the army."

"Well, well, I'll see what can be done; there's plenty of time," responded Wellesley.

No further allusion was made to the subject. It was not, however, forgotten by the secretary, though it did not produce any result until he had long left behind him the pleasant scenes of his

Irish official duties, and had commenced his grand career in the Peninsula.

I pass over a few years, when, one morning, I was called up by Dr. Cary, then head-master of Westminster—and conscience, which makes cowards of us all, gave me a pang, for it reminded me that on the previous day I had been out of bounds, a crime always attended, when discovered, with punishment. Whether Dr. Cary imbibed the love of flogging from a celebrated predecessor, I know not, but he certainly never spoil a child by sparing the rod; and it was said the system at that time pursued at Westminster School was founded on the practice of Dr. Busby, who was so notorious for his Spartan discipline, that he flogged his boys every Monday—because he knew they would deserve it during the week! However, on this occasion I was wrong in my opinion, for, with a kindly smile, Dr. Cary showed me the *Gazette*, in which I found myself appointed to a cornetcy, without purchase, in the Royal Horse Guards (Blues), the duke having recommended me for the first vacancy which occurred after he was made colonel of that distinguished corps.

From this period, all I had heard of the admirer of my early efforts was through the public journals, which in due course of time announced the reception of the duke at Dover in June, 1814.

I, with a view of being prepared for the army, had left Westminster, and was at a private tutor's near Newbury. Among other letters which I found one morning on the breakfast-table, was one franked by Wellington. As in those days peers of the realm and members of the House of Commons had the privilege of franking letters, it did not at all follow that the enclosure was from the same pen as the franker, I therefore read my other letters first, which consisted of scrawls from Old Dean's Yard cronies. I then turned to the franked letter, and, upon opening it, great was my surprise to see "Dear William" in a hand unknown to me, and greater still was it when I read as follows:—

The duke and duchess have consented to your accompanying me to Paris. You must lose no time in getting ready for the journey. When you arrive in town, call here.

Yours affectionately,

HAMILTON HOUSE, PICCADILLY,

WELLINGTON.

July 24th, 1814.

At first I fancied it was a hoax, but showing the letter to my tutor, he pronounced it to be genuine, for he had heard to the same effect from my father; so, taking leave of my young companions, I lost no time in proceeding to London, where my preparations for the journey were soon made, and on the day appointed I drove up to his grace's temporary residence in Hamilton Place. I was most kindly received by the duke, and punctual to the moment, he entered the carriage followed by the late Colonel De Burgh, afterwards Lord

Downes, and myself. During the drive, Wellington conversed upon a variety of subjects. He told us that in the morning he had been honoured by an audience with the Prince Regent, much to the annoyance of a German tailor, who was busily employed in sewing a coat upon the prince, that not a crease or wrinkle might appear on his royal person. He mentioned that, upon the previous day, after reviewing the Blues at Windsor and dining with the officers, he had a narrow escape from a very serious accident. In returning through Brentford at night, the linchpin came out of the fore-wheel of his carriage, by which it was upset. "I did not much mind that, or being detained at Brentford," said his grace; "my only annoyance was that the populace would insist on drawing me to London, and I had great difficulty in preventing them."

On reaching Coombe Wood, the Earl of Liverpool was in attendance to meet the duke, and a small party were assembled for dinner. Nothing could exceed the good humour and affability of the great man, who told anecdotes of the late war, laughed, jested, and kept the whole company in a state of delight.

One anecdote I well remember. The conversation turned upon field-sports during the Peninsula campaign. "While in Portugal," said his grace, "I was at the Villa Vicosa, the family seat of the Dukes of Braganza, and shot with ball ten head of deer in three days. The park in which they were is immense, and I dare say did not contain less than 5,000 head, many of them red deer."

From shooting he turned to hunting, describing the excellent runs his fox-hounds had in Spain and Portugal, and dwelling upon the great advantages he had found from having his officers well mounted.

"Felton Hervey, of the Fourteenth," he continued, "who had lost an arm when in pursuit of the enemy flying from Oporto, always mounted himself and his orderly upon English hunters, so as to make his escape should he at any time be unexpectedly surrounded. Upon one occasion, when reconnoitring, Hervey rode up, by mistake, to a small detachment of French cavalry. Fortunately for him, the men were dismounted, and busily employed in cooking their rations; but no sooner was the colonel discovered, and his rank recognised, than the order to mount was given. Hervey and his orderly, finding the odds greatly against them, immediately started off at a tremendous pace to reach our lines. The French dragons were quickly in their saddles, for the prize was worth gaining, and amidst wild shouts, and loud halloes, gave chase to their flying foes. The noise attracted the attention of some of the enemy's lancers, who, being posted nearer the English forces, were enabled to cut off the retreat of the fugitives. The clattering of the horses' hoofs, who had thus joined in the pursuit, sounded like a death-knell to the two gallant soldiers. 'Your only chance, colonel,' said the faithful orderly, 'is to make for that ravine.' Hervey followed the suggestion; the ravine was narrow, with only room for one horse to enter. No sooner had he gained it than, on looking round, a terrible sight presented itself. The devoted soldier, knowing that the life of his commanding officer could alone be saved by the sacrifice of his own, had placed himself across the narrow opening, and was literally pierced and cut to pieces. The delay thus occasioned, enabled Hervey to pursue his flight. Gaining the open he charged a stiff fence, and was soon out of sight of his pursuers."

(To be continued.)

A WORD UPON FICKLENESS.

BY THE REV. W. M. STATHAM.

HINE own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not." Good counsel that. Many pleasant novitiates in your companionship may have something much more sparkling and sprightly about them, but, depend upon it, your old and well-tried friend is one of the rarest and choicest blessings in the whole universe of God. There are many come-and-go friends, and there is one popular song which especially seems to suit our circumstances when suffering from fickle friendships, and it is this—"When the swallows homeward fly." That is very pleasing when sung with a piano accompaniment at an evening party; but, as a parable of common life, it reminds us, in

a chilly sort of way, of what the cold weather of adversity does to mere superficial friendships—in one word, it starts them off to a more congenial clime, to return perhaps when the warm weather does, if we are ever fortunate enough to secure a new summer-time of prosperity.

Apart, however, from the friendships of life, there are some people who are fickle in business and in duty. They oscillate in everything; they will, they won't; they won't, and they will; and after some half-hour's debate with you, concerning who's to be there, and which is the nearest way, and what's the number of your house or the name of your square, they leave you with the most indeterminate sense of what

they really intend to do: they have so conditioned their visit, by their vacillating remarks, that you may equally rely on their presence or their absence.

Now, fickle comes from the old Saxon "ficol," which simply means *not fixed*, and a fine word it is, despite the Americanism derived from it, of your "fixings," &c. To be fixed in principle and purpose is a great boon to others, as well as a very blessed thing for ourselves. April weather is all very well, and beautiful enough in its season; but it's only one month, and you know how to treat it. If you want it to be fine, take an umbrella; if you want a shower for your flower-beds, take a heavy umbrella out with you, and it will be most probably very fine and very hot. April is April, moody but beautiful, like a lovely maiden smiling through her tears; but April all the year round would be too much of it, and yet it is a symbol of many characters one has sometimes met in life—given to sudden smiles and tears, to varied chances and changes of things—fickle as an April day.

To come back, then, to our opening remark: an old friend is a fine thing, and to meet a friend of your boyhood, especially one who stuck to "young master" amid all the early escapades of life, is one of the real enjoyments of life. Never forget an old friend! I remember a middle-aged gentleman telling me that one day, as he was walking to Westminster Abbey, he passed the Horse Guards, and looked, as we all do, with pride upon the two stalwart sons of Old England, caparisoned, in the guard-boxes;—fine horses, fine trappings, fine men; but his eye rested particularly on one of these fine guardsmen. He scanned him well, till their eyes met. What a rush of feeling came over him when he saw in the grown man the companion of his childhood!—the youth who had saddled his pony, larked with him in the fields, and helped him out of many a boyish difficulty. He didn't forget him that day, I guess, in more respects than one. He had found an humble but honest friend of his childhood not to be forgotten. Fickle people change everything about them very often—houses, horses, servants, furniture, friends. Depend upon it that, as a rule, what a man is in one department of life, he is tolerably likely to be in another. You may not quite believe in that philosophy of life, but I do. Commend me to the man who sticks to his father's old watch, and to his mother's old arm-chair; I feel pretty certain that he will faithfully stick to an old friend.

Who does not love to think of stability in English character? Why, certainly, "hearts of oak" ought to be as unbending as they are enduring; and such, upon the whole, taken as a type, is the English character. It is a pleasant thing to pass through an English village, and to find old Squire So-and-So's family still living, through the

new generations, in the old hall, and occupying the same old square pew in church; it is pleasant also—

Now, I know what you are going to remark, says the quizzical reader;—amusing to go into church and find how other than fickle the parson is, in that he sticks to the old sermons. It is too bad of you to suggest that, and to spoil my illustration, for, in the first place, it isn't true; and, in the next place, the grand character of that dear, devout old clergyman is the real point I was coming to. His residence there through the long years has given him a marvellous personal influence, more eloquent and powerful in its operation than any sermon, however eloquent, he could ever preach. I should not have blamed him for accepting a deanery if he had been offered one, or a bishopric either, but I still say the stability of his character has been a special blessing to the place.

Whilst I am on this point, as divines sometimes say,—though we would think a point is not the thing to rest on long—yet allow me to say that fickleness in matters of church and chapel-going is a monstrous evil, especially in great cities. The peripatetic hearer, always on the tramp to listen to some new divine, is about one of the most contemptible characters to be found; he tries to glean in every field—but then those gleanings, what are they?—clevernesses and prettinesses of speech, &c.—these are his gettings, not the real gold of piety. The fickle hearer may be seen coquetting with half-a-dozen churches in succession; one preacher is too argumentative, another too imaginative, another too sympathetic, and another—who was such a dear man at first—is so very doctrinal. All honour to those noble fathers, many of whom have entered into rest, one of whose noblest characteristics was the fidelity with which they worked and helped the church where God had given them a place of duty, and who might be found, for half a century, always in their place. Right noble men they were, and who shall say how much the churches of to-day are indebted to their influence and their prayers?

It will scarcely be expected of me that I should say anything of fickleness in love. My critical friend tells me I shall be sure to offend some one. Perhaps the young man reading this, a regular reader, who is in desperate love with his seventh *fiancée*, will be disgusted, and never read a paper by me again. But I must risk that, for the luxury of having a smash at a being so utterly obnoxious. Flirting may be very funny, but I have no notion of mankind playing with the God-created faculties of human interest, and trust, and love; and the young man who has spent his earlier years of maturity in fickle friendships, which have been engagements under-



(Drawn by L. STRASZYNSKI.)

"But my spirit waxes bolder,
And hunger points to sin."—p. 347.

stood of all, is neither worthy of other men's respect, nor capable of feeling the loss of self-respect. I would have a "Coventry" like that of school-days kept up, to which such characters should be sent; instead of which, it is sometimes thought an amusing theme to brag about, and talk of *sotto voce*. I question very much whether in our ways of talking about the so-called flirtations of the young, we do not lose that sharp edge of feeling in such matters, which has much to do with the virtues of stability and honour.

Fickleness is the sign of a very weak nature. No truly great end was ever gained by a fickle man. The generals who have won lasting laurels in war; the engineers who have successfully tunnelled mountains, and bridged vast torrents, have been nobly bent on one purpose, and with unswerving energy kept to their purpose. Palissy the Potter stands before our thought at once as fixed in the determination to pursue his plan. Columbus never vacillated for an hour; and Carey, when he went to India, in the face of a hostile government and a hostile press, never wavered in his plans. Nor can we forget the great Example who set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem; who said, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" If we desire to drink into the spirit of Christ we shall endeavour, above all, to "finish our course" as did St. Paul, who followed so closely in his Master's steps.

Moreover, the disciple of the Redeemer need never fear change in him. Whoever may change, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! In his prophet Isaiah he says, "My kindness shall not depart from thee." Sooner shall Galilee embosom Lebanon, or the surrounding hills of old Jerusalem be swallowed up, than the protection, love, and sympathy of Christ ever be taken away. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth and even for ever." The kindness of some is but the handmaid to their own selfishness, or the impulse of their over-indulgent fancy—deceptive and dangerous as the thin ice on which the unwary tread; or as the marsh-land light, which but allures our steps to destroy our lives. We have no fickle Saviour; but one stable as the everlasting hills, and more enduring than the most imperishable work which his hands have framed! Never has he once dashed his pen through the handwriting of the covenant, for even to this day not one tittle of it has been broken! Whilst the years have rolled on with us all, and the love of some has turned to indifference, the love of others been like the waning moon, and the love of many more waxed cold, he has loved us

with an everlasting love, and will love us to the end.

And now let me remind you, so far as human friendships are concerned, that you need not wonder much why the stick in your father's study-corner is so precious to him—it's a well-tried one; nor why the friend your mother knew when they were young together, has such hearty preparations made for her visit. The cable which holds their friendship together has kept "taut" through the gales of adversity; and it is a rare treat to meet again and feel that the friendship has been cemented, instead of having been severed, by the storms of life. No new friends can equal old ones, remember that. School friends, college friends, early home friends—these should be cherished by us with a warm and hearty love.

Of course, I need not make much of a reply to my critical friend, when he asks if we are always to be the same,—if we are never to be exalted or depressed—never to be cheerful or dull—never to have anything plus or minus in our manner—because variety of states of mind is not the same thing as fickleness of heart and instability of character. Perhaps our great English classic has depicted fickleness better than any uninspired writer when, in "Romeo and Juliet," he says,

"More inconstant than the wind, who woos
Even now the frozen bosom of the North,
And, being angered, puffs away from thence,
Turning his face to the dew-dropping South."

And again, in the "Two Gentlemen of Verona,"

"O Heaven! were man
But constant, he were perfect: that one error
Fills him with faults—makes him run thro' all sins.
Inconstancy falls off ere it begins."

It is manifest, therefore, that fickleness is no new-world fault, but has belonged to every generation of men—even as far back as the days when the inspired words were written, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

Not to be fickle, then, is to be *fixed*, to be fixed in our friendships, our principles, our pursuits. We may gain some passing notoriety by changefulness and jugglery of principle, but we shall gain no real reputation. There is an old, old proverb—When God loathes aught, men come presently to loathe it too; and as the Lord hates the vain, the fickle, and the false, so in the end men abhor them too. In the long run, as men say, nothing succeeds like truth and honesty. The fickle can be neither of these—they play with principles as people play with dice, and if they do not lie in wait to deceive, they deceive without the previous lying in wait at all. Of all tantalising experiences in the desert journey, that is the most so when the worn and jaded camels press towards the desert palm-trees, and approach with

weary steps the well—only to find it dry; and of all the bitter experiences of human life, to believe some friend, and when the needed sympathy is sought, to find the cistern of human consolation empty, is bitterest of all.

But the friends of the Saviour never need dread failure in him—he is evermore the same—he is in us a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. He is a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother.

TEMPTED.



WOFUL world I was born to—
A woful world of pain,
Which the cold winds bring their scorn to,
Or their grief in a bitter rain.

So dimmed my eyes with sorrow,
And so my grief runs o'er,
That it seems to me each to-morrow
Is darker than that before.

The season chills, and colder
My faint heart beats within;
But my spirit waxes bolder,
And hunger points to sin.

And what is life but a trial
Which the hardened safe pass through?
But conscience's cold denial
Will the cautious souls undo.

And why should some have plenty,
Some hunger day by day?
I am young—I think scarce twenty
Sad years have passed away—

Ah! God preserve and pity,
Lest wild thoughts drag me down
In the flood of this great city
To gasp in vain, and drown!

PEGGY OGLIVIE'S INHERITANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ROUND THE COURT," ETC.

CHAPTER XLVII.

OLD SWEETHEARTS.



JEAN was now a widow. Poor old Tammas was dead, and his wife missed him sadly; chiefly because she had no one to scold and no one to serve, and both were necessary to her as her very breath. She was quite a prosperous woman too, which made her isolation all the more unendurable. Her little shop wore the aspect of a perfect paradise to the youthful population of Burnside; but, as she dealt out its sweets, her temper grew more and more bitter, and her words sharper and sharper.

Jean was sitting one day behind her little counter, waiting upon her customers, two of whom were in anxious consultation outside the window, as to the most economical expenditure of a bawbee (halfpenny, called a bawbee from its having been the first coin which bore the baby-face of the hapless Mary Stuart). They were as yet undecided as to whether "Gibraltar rock" or "sugar boots" would "pairt best," that is, go furthest on an equal division, when old Mr. Haldane drew near.

It was shortly after his nephew's return from Bleaktown, on the occasion of his introduction to Mrs. Rose, that the old man found a pretext for the visit with which he was about to honour Jean. She had more than once repulsed him already, but he had special reasons for this particular visit, and was not a man to suffer from such repulse as hers. His nephew had taken the first opportunity he could find, to tell him that he must have been deceived by

Captain Oglivie on the subject of his marriage; and if there was one thing more than another which the old man detested, it was the supposition that it was possible for him to be deceived at all. He was, therefore, bent upon knowing the true state of the case.

"Good day to you," he said, in his blandest tones, as he entered the little shop.

But Jean, stiff and unrecognising, looked up at him, and asked if there was anything she could serve him with.

"I cam to ask whether there was anything you wanted in the way of repairs," he answered, with a smile at the old woman's independent manner.

"Naething, I thank ye," she answered, shortly.

"Rents hae been risin'," he went on; "only last term Lucky Simpson offered my agent twa pund mair for this bit place, but I told him ye were a steady payer, and bade him refuse the offer."

"It's an ill-dune thing to tak a hoose ower a body's heid," she broke in; "I never kent it prosper."

"It hasna prospered in this instance," he answered; "ye may hae the place as lang as ye like to keep it."

"It's dootless kind o' ye," said Jean, "but I winna be beholden to you, David Haldane."

There was a toss of her grey head and flash of her grey eye as she said this, which recalled a high-spirited lass to his memory, whose beauty and brightness had been the load-star of his early manhood; and he stood looking at her, and wondering at her freedom and spirit, in half-amused surprise.

But the old woman's tongue had been loosened,

and ran away with her, thenceforth. "If it hadna been you, I would have had a bein' hoose bye (besides) this ower my heid, and my kindly auld man would hae been livin' yet. He jist pined away in the back-shop there."

"I don't see how I can be held accountable for that," her hearer interrupted.

But Jean paid not the slightest heed to the interruption, but went on boldly. "An' the bairn I nursed on my knee, and that was like my ain, though she was an Oglivie, ye hae driven awa to get her livin' in a foreign land, because ye coveted the heritage o' the orphan."

Like other and greater rhetoricians, Jean was unmindful of the stricter meaning of words; she forgot that Peggy's father was still alive. But she had hit hard, and her hearer winced a little.

"Ye're a changed man, David Haldane, since I first kent ye; the siller's hardened yere hert."

Again that flash of resemblance, this time extending to the tones of the voice. Perhaps she was related to her whom she thus strangely brought to mind.

"Ye're a bauld woman to speak in that way to ane that can tak the bread out o' yere mouth. Where do ye come frae?"

"Frae 'yont the hills," said Jean. "Ye hae nae mind o' me. I have often thoct ye maun mind, but didna' care to let on since ye had grown a grandee; but I see ye hae clean forgotten, or ye wadna speak o' takin' the bread out o' my mouth. I wadna like to stand in your shoon in the day of judgment gin ye daur to do 't."

Mr. Haldane had had enough. He held up his hand to deprecate further words, and said quietly—he could afford to be calm, for the other was unjust—"I came here in kindness, woman, and I hardly understand how we have come to this. Ye mind me of some one I knew; will you tell me your maiden name?"

Jean rose from her seat, still tall and stately, and looked straight into his eyes. "I'm Jean M'Duff."

"Surely no!"

"I tell ye I'm Jean M'Duff—the same ye wrangled lang syne, and threw away, when ye had wooed and won, for a jealous fancy o' yere ain."

"Ah, weel, Jean, I never thoct to meet you in this world again. We maun let bygones be bygones, for the sake o' auld lang syne;" and he held out his hand, tamely enough, though he was in reality deeply moved.

"I'll do nae sic thing as let bygones be bygones," said Jean, ignoring the offered hand. "I was true as steel, an' ye treated me like a false quean (damsel). I was innocent as the babe unborn, and ye threw me off like a foul thing. Delaube brought me the bit kerchief, and tell'd me it was frae you, and that ye had tauld him to tak' a kiss for't. An' I took it, and he gat naething for't, for I kent he was jokin' An' for that bit joke ye spoiled my hail life."

"And in a sense mine has been spoiled too, Jean," he answered, softly; "I have never married, and I

suffered long and sore. What for did ye never try to set me richt?"

"I thoct ye ought to hae kent me better than ever to hae put me in the wrang. Father and mother mistrusted me too; but I wouldna' be at the pains to set ony o' ye richt, and I left their hoose on the head o't."

"And went to serve him?" said the old man, with an interrogative more stern than before.

Here, however, they were interrupted by the entrance of the two purchasers—their purchase finally decided upon—and during the time devoted to their service David Haldane turned his back to Jean, and to the world in general, lost in a flood of softening and yet painful memories.

When they were gone, Jean had somehow softened too. "I had come through the hard first," she continued, finding a keen pleasure in telling her story, and telling it to him. "I went back to where my folk had come frae, and took a place there; but I had the small-pox on me, and being a stranger, they sent me away. If it hadna been for Tammass's mother, I might hae deed like a dog; but she took me in and nursed me, and trusted me baith for siller and guid fame. An' Tammass was drawn for the militia, and Colonel Oglivie's regiment was the one he was 'listed in. One day I met the colonel, and told him my story, and he was for goin' to you wi' t at ance but I gar'd him promise never to mention it; and he keptit his word, like the gentleman he was. An' he made Tammass his servant, and when my poor man's mother deed, he sent me to nurse Mrs. Oglivie. Poor leddy! she was o'er delicate to lead a wanderin' life. I stayed wi' her till she left the world, and I hae brocht up her bairn, and her bairn's bairn, at the auld place."

"And your own folk, Jean?"

"They were clean gane by the time I cam' back. A sore, sore hurt it was to me, for it was time then to forget an' forgive."

"It's aye time for that, Jean," said her old lover; and now it was Jean who held out her wrinkled hand, and it was not refused.

"I would never have kent you," he said, "if ye hadna been in an ill tune (ill temper); and then I only half made it oot. Ye minded me o' my Jean, but changed."

"It was the illness that changed me; it didna mark me much, but it turned my colour to this deid white. I grat (wept) when I saw 't first, for I didna ken myself."

"I would marry ye yet, Jean, only it would be a mockery."

"That would be a marriage!" she snarled, in contempt.

Then the two old people resorted to the back-shop, or parlour, and Haldane drew from Jean the recent history of Peggy Oglivie, as far as she knew it.

"She's goin' about from place to place, paintin' pictures. The places are Rue this and Rue that. They a' begin wi' rue. It's an ill trade, I fancy." (Jean's only idea of art was taken from the works of a roaming artist, whose performances in profile, in which she and

Tammas were represented black as ebony, adorned her parlour.) "I'll let you read her last letter, an ye like."

So David Haldane read Peggy's last letter, never meant for his eyes, and somehow it touched him strangely, with its brave, confiding trust in an untried world.

"She's a brave lassie, and a bonnie," he said, when he had read it. "And you tell me there's no a word o' truth in the report that she was to marry Captain Oglivie?"

"No a word, or I would hae heard it. To tell you my mind, I would hae thought it more likely if it had been said o' your nephew, David. But these things are best left unmeddled wi'."

David Haldane thought so too, as he went his way home. "I'll tell the lad," he said to himself, meaning that he would tell his nephew what he had heard, and how he had, even though too late, changed his mind on the one vexed question between them.

Another resolve he made, and that was to rid himself of Captain Oglivie: and he lost no time in intimating to that gentleman that it was desirable to close the account between them.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ORDEAL BY FIRE.

OWING to the increased traffic between Burnside and Bleaktown, an evening coach had been put upon the road, starting from the latter place at eight o'clock on the summer evenings, and reaching its furthest point of destination some three hours later.

It was a fair though moonless night in July, and David Haldane was returning from Bleaktown, satisfied that at last he might achieve his longed-for holiday. He was not, as usual, returning alone, but with two companions for the pleasant little journey, an elderly gentleman and a lady, whom he helped carefully to their seats on the roof before he took his own. The elderly gentleman was our friend Dr. Grant; the lady was no other than Mrs. Rose.

There had been strife, for the first time in its history, real and bitter strife, in the minister's family, concerning Mrs. Rose. When Archie announced to his father and mother the fact of his engagement, the latter was highly, and, as she considered, justly, indignant; while the former, with all his generosity and unworldliness, was far from pleased. "You ought to have considered," he said to his son, "that you are still in a dependent position, and may be for years to come, and that you had no right to bind any young woman to a future so uncertain;" language at which Mrs. Grant was more indignant still. That her son had been entrapped by a designing woman, was her view of the matter; and the simple course to pursue was, to break the engagement and defeat the design.

In accordance with this conviction, she wrote a letter to Mrs. Rose's mother, setting forth her grievance. It was a hard, cold, but not unreasonable letter, in which she treated Archie as a mere boy,

who had no right to make engagements which he could not fulfil, his future being still in his father's hands.

This letter was sent, notwithstanding her husband's warning that harm would come of it. "You know, my dear," he remonstrated, "that we have done all that in us lay to form the boys' minds and tastes; and I can't think that Archie's judgment and taste would be so sorely at fault, on such an important matter, as to allow him to fall in love with an unworthy, scheming woman; and if, as Sandie says, she is all that's good and excellent, we have no call to interfere, however much we may regret the step he has taken."

But the good man's mild wisdom was overruled. Mrs. Grant did interfere, and harm came of it. Rose wrote to her lover, giving him up at once and for ever. Her letter was full of gentle dignity. She could not bear to do anything which would displease her own dear mother; and therefore, she said, he must not ask her to displease his, by coming to her as an unwelcome wife. All that his mother (Mrs. Grant) had said was true, and she would not complain of it. She would carry the memory of his generous affection with her through life—an affection which gave so much and asked so little. It was better that he should be free to marry one who would bring no sad memories of a former love to his home, on whose joy in his happiness there should be no shadow.

And the letter roused Archie to indignant wrath, for it showed, by the old wound's fresh bleeding, that the heart of the writer was wounded anew. And the young man rose up, pale and resolute, and asked his father's leave to pack up his few belongings, and go away at once to make his own life. Then there had been remonstrance, and entreaty, and passionate upbraiding in the family circle, till Dr. Grant took the matter into his own hands, and effected a compromise by offering to go himself and see Mrs. Rose.

And he did go, and saw, and was conquered. He was also conqueror, for Mrs. Rose would not have yielded to the son as she yielded to the father. But for him, she would have persisted in her first refusal. As it was, a general pacification had ensued, and only the doctor knew with how little cordiality his wife agreed to it.

And now here was the infatuated man bringing Mrs. Rose back with him, quite unexpectedly, for a visit to the manse, when he had only promised to call upon her, as he happened to be in town.

They had had a pleasant journey among the little hills and the sunset splendours lingering long in that northern region, and were nearing Burnside in what seemed scarcely darker than a dawn, though it wanted little more than an hour of midnight. They had reached a bit of high-level ground a little above the village, and the whole party had sunk into silence, when David Haldane uttered an exclamation, and half started from his seat, making every one of his fellow-passengers turn in the direction in which he was looking.

He was looking in the direction of the Forest House, whose chimneys he could have seen in the daylight, but which were not distinguishable from the surrounding trees just then. But there was a lighter belt of sky over in the direction of the house, and against it rose a trail of smoke, licked now and then by a slender tongue of fire.

Again and again at intervals darted out the snake-like tongue of flame, and exclamation followed exclamation as one and another caught the thrilling sight.

"Whose place is it?" asked a stranger.

"A Miss Oglivie lives there," replied the coachman. "There's a friend o' hers inside," he added, cautiously; "we'd better let him ken. It's a lone house, and little water about, and the only man a fule, puir fellow. I shouldna wonder if he had set the place on fire."

"Drive on," said David Haldane, "we may be of use;" and the horses went down-hill at a gallop.

Meantime Captain Oglivie was dozing inside the coach. He had come up too late to secure an outside seat, and had had the inside entirely to himself the whole of the way.

When the coach reached what was called "the cross-road," leading to the Forest House, it came to a stop, and the coachman, tapping with his whip on the window, roused the half-sleeping occupant by calling out, in a stentorian voice, that the Forest House was on fire.

The shout and the stoppage roused Captain Oglivie, who called out, rather ill-humouredly, to know what it meant. Two of the passengers had already dismounted, David Haldane and a young man belonging to the village, with the intention of hastening to the help of the inmates of the burning house. The latter informed the captain of what they had seen on the hill above.

Then Captain Oglivie sprang to his feet, and was on the road to the house in a moment, without a word, or a look behind to see who followed. David Haldane had lost a few minutes saying good-night to Dr. Grant and Mrs. Rose, and he was therefore last in the race, though all three kept close behind each other. It was dark and still down there among the trees, but as they ran and neared the house they could hear the peculiar windy rush and roar of fire, and see the glimmer, which burst into a glare as they emerged from the wood and came on in front of the house.

The servants were all out; there were but four of them, an old woman and a young lass, an old man and a boy. They stood in front of the house, half-dressed, their teeth chattering with fear, doing nothing and attempting nothing, looking on fascinated by the serpent flames which darted out of more than one window, and drew themselves in again from the hard granite to find fitter food on the wood-work within.

"Where's your mistress?" cried the captain, dashing on the affrighted little group.

"She was here a' safe a minute syne," said the old woman.

"She's in again," said the boy.

Captain Oglivie was about to follow; rapid and resolute, and perfectly self-possessed, his face yet looked ghastly in its paleness and eagerness in the dismal, distorting light. He showed his white teeth as he spoke, scarcely dividing them to hiss out the words, "Why do you stand there, staring like idiots? Come and help me to get her out again: she must be suffocated there;" and he made for the open door, out of which the smoke was now issuing.

David Haldane and the stranger came up just then, and followed Captain Oglivie into the hall, which, being in the centre of the burning house, while as yet the fire was confined to one of the sides, was still unlighted by the flames, though filled with dense clouds of smoke. It was rapidly becoming impassable, and they were all about to retreat, when a cry from Captain Oglivie caused David Haldane to spring forward.

"Help here!" he cried, himself half stifled. He had stumbled on the body of Margery, prostrate at the foot of the stair, and the two men half dragged, half carried her to the open door, where the others gathered round her still breathing form.

In the fresh air she revived—it seemed almost by force of will, for the first words she uttered were—"The back stair—try the back stair."

"There is another life in danger," said David Haldane; and for the first time Captain Oglivie heard his voice, and looked in his face. At that moment a thrill of repulsion ran through the two men, not to be accounted for by the attitude of either up to that time.

"We can leave her now," added David, quitting his hold and resigning his place to the women. "Captain Oglivie, you know the house; lead the way."

"Perhaps you will go round," said the captain, addressing the stranger, and not deigning to notice David Haldane, "and I will direct you from one of the windows."

It seemed the best thing to do; trying to save the house was altogether out of the question. A few bucketsful of water, drawn slowly from the well, would be mocked at by the now raging flames. They must try, at every point, to save that other life.

They hastened round the burning end of the house, and Captain Oglivie passed on and into the interior by the kitchen entrance. The rush and the roar was increasing every moment. The red glare of the fire was thrown upon the trees, which seemed to reel and dance with its fitfulness, like a crowd of dark and dreadful creatures exulting in destruction and mocking at misery; and up there, at one of the still untouched windows, appeared a human figure, horror of horrors, behind iron bars!

"We can do nothing from without," cried David Haldane, in despair.

It seemed an age was passing, and no Captain Oglivie appeared.

The man and boy had followed them.

"Can you get me an axe," he called out.

The boy ran and brought one from the tool-house close at hand.

"We can drive those stanchions out, and let him down through the window, if we can only get into the room."

Another window burst, crackling into flame: still no Captain Oglivie.

"We shall be too late," cried David. "Let us go in."

"Perhaps he has been choked back," replied the stranger, hesitating.

"Is there a rope to be had?" was the next question; and the boy having answered, "Ay," and gone off for it to the tool-house again, David asked the stranger to take charge of it, and hastened to follow where Captain Oglivie had disappeared.

The back staircase was clear when Captain Oglivie entered, as far, at least, as the first flight. At the top of the second flight a door shut it off, with the rooms belonging to it, from the remainder of the house, but this door and the landing leading to it were on fire already, only an open staircase window kept the downward flight almost free from smoke.

It was therefore not the smoke that had overpowered Captain Oglivie, who was leaning on the lower stair rail like one deadly sick. David Haldane, whose shouts had rung through the house, had seen him issue from the door of a room close at hand.

"This is not the room," said the former, breathlessly. "Where is it?"

"Beyond," replied Captain Oglivie, pointing to a barrier of fire. "It is not possible to reach it."

"Have you tried?" They looked at each other fiercely.

"You are no coward," said David Haldane. "We must try together," and he was half way up the stair as he spoke. But they were saved the trial, for all at once, with a terrible crash, the landing gave way. The fire had eaten away its supports on the other side. David Haldane had only just time to spring

back to the place where Captain Oglivie was still standing.

The well of the staircase was now filled with burning material, and the door by which they had entered was blocked. Together they retreated into the room from which the captain had issued, and shut the door. Escape was easy. The window was but one storey from the ground. They were soon standing in safety beneath it. On reaching the ground, David Haldane stumbled on something in the grass which he could see resembled an old-fashioned escritoire; but he did not stop a moment to consider, as he afterwards did, that it had been saved at the sacrifice of a human life, but ran on to the spot where he had left the others. He was hailed with a shout. They had two short ladders, and were lacing them together, in order to reach the window from without.

The ladders were laced at last, and David Haldane mounted with his hatchet, the others giving place to him. With a few ringing blows he drove the old rusty bars out of their wooden frame, and crashed through glass and woodwork. Then out of the window came a dense smoke, which drove him, for a moment, down some rounds of the ladder. At the same moment the dark room shot into a blaze of light, and, on venturing up again and looking in, he saw the form of Sir Alexander Oglivie lying prostrate by the window within his reach. Another breathless moment, and he had entered and dragged him out, and with the help at hand succeeded in lowering him to the ground.

The fire had not touched him. The dense smoke that filled the room from the heart of the burning house had clouded his brain and stolen away his breath, but had left no trace of parting pain upon the still white face: and they bore him gently to a little distance, and laid him down upon the cool dewy grass.

(To be continued.)

A MINUTE'S DELAY.

TAKE this letter to the post, my son. Make haste, or you will be too late. Don't lose a moment."

While his father was still speaking, the boy hastily put the letter in his pocket, and set off at full speed. The post-office was about half a mile off. Bob ran all the way as far as the New Road, at the further end of which the pillar-post stood. In less than two minutes he could reach it, even if he slackened his pace to a steady walk. He pulled out his watch, and found it wanted nearly three minutes to the time when the letter-box would be closed, or rather emptied of its contents. He thought he should just have time to stop a minute to speak with his playmate Jem Hall, whom he saw running across the road to meet him. In their eagerness for a little chat the boys ran up against

each other, and almost pushed down a little child who was passing near.

"I say, Bob," Jem began, in breathless haste, "I was afraid I should miss you, you were going up the street at such a rate."

"Well, Jem, it's true, I'm in a great hurry; I've got a letter to post before four, and it only wants about three minutes to the hour."

"Oh, I see," said Jim; "I shan't keep you a minute. I only want just to show you this jolly pair of new skates; my Uncle Fred sent me them yesterday."

Bob took them in his hands to look at them closely, and he so much admired them that he said, "I only wish the pair I have got was half as good as yours. They are real stunners! But never mind, I can skate well enough with my old ones."

"That's right," said Jim; "we are both satisfied then. Now, all I want of you, old fellow, is just to promise to meet me this evening, about seven o'clock, at the miller's duck-pond. It will be quite moon-light, and we shall have some capital fun."

"But are you sure the ice will bear?" said Bob, doubtfully.

"Sure it will bear! of course I am. I was on it this morning before breakfast, and where it was broken near the edge for the ducks, I saw some big blocks of ice, not less than three inches thick."

"That will do then—I'll come if I can; but I must be off now," said Bob, pulling out his watch, and seeing that it wanted less than two minutes to four.

Jim went home with his skates, and Bob ran off with the letter, which he took out of his pocket and carried in his hand, ready to pop it into the box. As he was hastening along the middle of the road, he stumbled over a large stone which was lying in his path, and fell down. He hurt one of his knees severely, and after he had raised himself with difficulty from the ground, he was obliged to creep along at a snail's pace. At last he reached the pillar; but, half a minute before he could do so, the mail cart had carried all the letters away, and had got almost out of sight, though he could still hear its wheels rattling over the stones some distance away.

Bob put the letter in the box, and felt much vexed that it was too late to go that night. He was afraid of meeting his father, lest he should be asked about the letter, and be blamed for his disobedience. But when Bob went home, he was glad to find that his father had gone out, and was not expected back till very late.

After tea he took his skates with him to meet Jim; but his leg being still rather stiff through his fall, and his spirits down about the letter, he did not enjoy the skating.

Three days later, when Bob was at breakfast, a postman's knock was heard at the door, and presently three letters were brought in, and handed to his father. One of them was a returned letter. This was opened first in great haste. It was the *too late* letter which Bob had posted the other evening. His father dropped the letter down on the table before Bob, and with a look of anguish said to him, "How is this?"

Bob turned red and white by turns. He knew not what to say. His father understood his silence and confusion, and said, "Oh! what mischief you have done, by neglecting to put that letter in the post in time. I shall be a loser of more than fifty pounds by it. But that is not all. I expect to hear to-morrow of far worse consequences to another."

"Oh, papa!" cried Bob, "I am so sorry! I was only a minute behind time. I ran all the way, and fell down when within a hundred yards of the pillar. I hurt myself so much that I could scarcely crawl along, or I should have managed to be in time."

"But," his father replied; "if what you say is true, why did you not tell me the next morning about

it. If you had done that, less trouble and loss might possibly have happened than must now take place."

"I was afraid to tell you," answered Bob; "because I knew you would be very angry with me for being too late."

"Certainly not, if you have not disobeyed me, and stopped on the road, which I am afraid you must really have done."

Bob looked still more confused. "Oh, papa," he cried, covering his hot, red face with his hands; "the truth must out, and you have already guessed it. I stayed just a minute, which I thought I could well spare, to speak with Jem Hall about his new skates; and then, to make up for the delay, I ran along the middle of the road in such violent haste, that I struck my foot against a big stone, and fell down, as I told you before."

"You have been a very bad boy indeed, and deserve to be well punished for your disobedience; and punishment enough will come upon you. You will suffer by my loss; but more than that, you will have yourself to blame for it all."

Next day a letter came from the same person to whom the returned letter had been addressed. It was dated from Liverpool. In it the writer stated as follows:—

"Not finding any letter at the Scarborough post-office on the day when it was due, I was obliged to leave word there that should it come the next day, it must be returned to the sender as too late. Whether it came then, of course, is now known to you, as in that case you must have got it back by this time. I hardly need tell you that I am ruined by this cruel disappointment and delay. The bill was dishonoured through default of the cheque for ten pounds which you were to send me. I had all the rest; but what was the use of it? I could not meet the payment of £100 with only ninety. My character is gone as one sad consequence; and another is, that I have lost an employment worth £200 a-year. Your own loss, as surety, will be £50, and I am very sorry for it; but what is that to mine?—mine is, I fear, quite irreparable. As I shall be on my way to America when you receive this, I must wait long enough for an explanation of the cause of my bitter disappointment and grievous loss."

Bob's father was thrown into the deepest distress by this painful letter. It was not his own loss—though he could ill bear that—but the suffering of his poor friend, which he felt so much concerned for. That was overwhelming. With some difficulty he raised the money, which he was called upon to pay immediately as one of his friend's sureties; and Bob suffered the consequence of his father's loss in a double manner, as his father told him he must: he forfeited the beautiful gold watch-chain his father had promised to buy him as a new year's gift; and what was far worse, he for a long time lost his father's confidence. Bob now saw what immense mischief a minute's delay had done; and bitterly he reproached himself for not obeying his father's injunction, "Don't lose a moment." W. H.